

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION

RODERICK STREETER,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	Case No. 1:05-cv-493
)	
v.)	Honorable Gordon J. Quist
)	
UNKNOWN PARTIES,)	
)	
Defendants.)	
)	

OPINION

This is a civil rights action brought by a state prisoner pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act, PUB. L. NO. 104-134, 110 STAT. 1321 (1996) (“PLRA”), “no action shall be brought with respect to prison conditions . . . until such administrative remedies as are available are exhausted.” 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a). Because Plaintiff has failed to demonstrate exhaustion of available administrative remedies, the Court will dismiss his complaint without prejudice.

Discussion

I. Factual allegations

Plaintiff is presently incarcerated at Earnest C. Brooks Correctional Facility. In his *pro se* complaint, he sues the “Medical Staff of MDOC” for failing to provide him with proper medical treatment for his ongoing hip problems. Plaintiff suffers pain in his hip and is unable to walk some days. He seeks injunctive relief as well as an unspecified amount of monetary damages for his pain and suffering.

II. Lack of exhaustion of available administrative remedies

Plaintiff has failed sufficiently to allege and show exhaustion of available administrative remedies. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a), a prisoner bringing an action with respect to prison conditions under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 must exhaust available administrative remedies. *See Porter v. Nussle*, 534 U.S. 516 (2002); *Booth v. Churner*, 532 U.S. 731 (2001). The exhaustion requirement is mandatory and applies to all suits regarding prison conditions, regardless of the nature of the wrong or the type of relief sought. *Porter*, 534 U.S. at 520; *Booth*, 532 U.S. at 741. A district court must enforce the exhaustion requirement *sua sponte*. *Brown v. Toombs*, 139 F.3d 1102, 1104 (6th Cir. 1998); *accord Wyatt v. Leonard*, 193 F.3d 876, 879 (6th Cir. 1999).

A prisoner must allege and show that he has exhausted all available administrative remedies and should attach to his § 1983 complaint the administrative decision disposing of his complaint, if the decision is available.¹ *Brown*, 139 F.3d at 1104. In the absence of written documentation, the prisoner must describe with specificity the administrative proceeding and its outcome so that the Court may determine what claims, if any, have been exhausted. *Knuckles El v. Toombs*, 215 F.3d 640, 642 (6th Cir. 2000). In addition, a prisoner must specifically mention the involved parties in the grievance to alert the prison officials to the problems so that the prison has a chance to address the claims before they reach federal court. *Curry v. Scott*, 249 F.3d 493, 505 (6th Cir. 2001); *Thomas v. Woolum*, 337 F.3d 720, 735 (6th Cir. 2003); *Vandiver v. Martin*, No. 02-1338, 2002 WL 31166925, at *2 (6th Cir. Sept. 27, 2002) (“The issues [plaintiff] may raise, and the

¹To assist prisoners in meeting this requirement, this Court advises prisoners to attach copies of documents evidencing exhaustion in its form complaint. The form complaint, which is required by local rule, is disseminated to all the prisons. *See* W.D. MICH. LCIVR 5.6(a).

defendants he may name, in his lawsuit are limited to the specific issues raised, and the specific individuals mentioned, in his grievance.”).

The Michigan Department of Correction provides a three-step prison grievance process. *See* MICH. DEP’T OF CORR., Policy Directive 03.02.130, ¶ E (may grieve “alleged violations of policy and procedure or unsatisfactory conditions of confinement”) (effective 4/28/03). Petitioner filed a Step I grievance on June 20, 2005, complaining that he had made two requests to see the doctor about his hip. He received a Step I response on June 30, 2005. Plaintiff’s Step II appeal remains pending. A plaintiff must pursue all levels of the administrative procedure before filing an action in federal court. *See Freeman v. Francis*, 196 F.3d 641, 645 (6th Cir. 1999) (“While we recognize that plaintiff made some attempt to go through the prison’s grievance procedures, we must dismiss plaintiff’s complaint because he filed his federal complaint before allowing the administrative process to be completed.”); *Lutchev v. Wiley*, No. 98-3760, 1999 WL 645951, at *1 (6th Cir. Aug. 13, 1999) (dismissal of claim for lack of exhaustion was appropriate where prisoners failed to complete the review process before bringing their lawsuit); *Larkins v. Wilkinson*, No. 97-4183, 1998 WL 898870, at *1 (6th Cir. Dec. 17, 1998) (“Furthermore, even though Larkins may not have aborted the grievance procedure regarding the ninth cause of action raised in his complaint, such grievance was not resolved prior to the filing of either his complaint or amended complaint and, consequently, is unexhausted.”). Because Plaintiff did not complete the grievance process before filing his complaint, the Court finds that he has failed to demonstrate exhaustion of available administrative remedies.²

²Even if Plaintiff had completed the three-step grievance process, his complaint would be subject to dismissal because he fails to name specific health care providers in his grievance. *See Curry*, 249 F.3d at 505; *Thomas*, 337 F.3d at 735. Moreover, Plaintiff fails to name any individual health care provider as a defendant in the complaint. Plaintiff may not maintain an action against the MDOC because it is absolutely immune from suit under the Eleventh Amendment. *See Pennhurst State Sch. & Hosp. v. Halderman*, 465 U.S. 89, 100 (1984).

It is not clear whether Plaintiff may still grieve his claims. Under the policy of the prison, complaints must be resolved expeditiously, and complaints may be rejected as untimely. *See* Policy Directive 03.02.130, ¶ G(4). The Sixth Circuit held that an inmate cannot simply claim that “he has exhausted his remedies or that it is futile for him to do so because his grievance is now time-barred under the regulations.” *Hartsfield v. Vidor*, 199 F.3d 305, 309 (6th Cir. 1999) (citing *Wright v. Morris*, 111 F.3d 414, 417 n.3 (6th Cir. 1997)). However, even if the MDOC considers a subsequent grievance to be untimely, a prisoner who has presented a grievance through one complete round of the prison process will nevertheless be deemed to have exhausted available administrative remedies as required by 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a). *See Thomas*, 337 F.3d at 733.

Because the exhaustion requirement is no longer discretionary, but is mandatory, the Court does not have the discretion to provide a continuance in the absence of exhaustion. *See Wright*, 111 F.3d at 417. Rather, dismissal of this action without prejudice is appropriate when a prisoner has failed to show that he exhausted available administrative remedies. *See Freeman*, 196 F.3d at 645; *Brown*, 139 F.3d at 1104; *White v. McGinnis*, 131 F.3d 593, 595 (6th Cir. 1997). Dismissal for failing to exhaust available administrative remedies does not relieve a plaintiff from payment of the civil action filing fee. *Smeltzer v. Hook*, 235 F. Supp. 2d 736, 746 (W.D. Mich. 2002) (citing *Omar v. Lesza*, No. 97 C 5817, 1997 WL 534361, at *1 (N.D. Ill. Aug. 26, 1997)). Accordingly, the Court will dismiss his action without prejudice.

Conclusion

Having conducted the review now required by the Prison Litigation Reform Act, the Court will dismiss Plaintiff’s action without prejudice because he has failed to show exhaustion as required by 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a).

The Court must next decide whether an appeal of this action would be in good faith within the meaning of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3). *See McGore v. Wrigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601, 611 (6th Cir. 1997). For the same reasons that the Court dismisses the action, the Court discerns no good-faith basis for an appeal. Should Plaintiff appeal this decision, the Court will assess the \$255 appellate filing fee pursuant to § 1915(b)(1), *see McGore*, 114 F.3d at 610-11, unless Plaintiff is barred from proceeding *in forma pauperis*, e.g., by the “three-strikes” rule of § 1915(g). If he is barred, he will be required to pay the \$255 appellate filing fee in one lump sum.

A Judgment consistent with this Opinion will be entered.

Dated: August 18, 2005

/s/ Gordon J. Quist
GORDON J. QUIST
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE